REMARKS

Claims 1-7 are pending in this application.

By this Amendment, the specification is amended to obviate informalities. In particular, "sinks" is amended to "sinks 13" (page 9, line 11; now paragraph [0030]) and "Fig. 7A, 7B, and 7C" are amended to "Fig. 3A, 3B, and 3C" (page 5, lines 4-5; now paragraph [0051]).

The specification is amended to change "honeycomb catalyst" to "honeycomb structure" so that the honeycomb structure before and in the process of filling the cell is referred to as "honeycomb carrier," and the honeycomb structure after the process of filling the cell is referred to as "honeycomb structure." The claims and the Abstract are similarly amended. The specification is further amended to add paragraph numbers and to update headings.

The amendments to the claims are merely for clarity, and are not related to substantive issues related to patentability.

No new matter is added. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

The Office Action objects to the drawings and the specification. The specification is amended to obviate informalities, as outlined above. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to the drawings and specification is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claim 7 as being anticipated by JP 10-314523 (hereinafter referred to as "D1"); and rejects claims 1-6 as being unpatentable over D1 in view of Bonzo (U.S. Patent No. 4,557,773) (hereinafter referred to as "D2"). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

I. The Configuration Recited in the Claims

Claim 1 of the present application has the following configurations:

Method of manufacturing a honeycomb structure, comprising:

1) Immersing an end surface of a honeycomb carrier in a slurry,

2) Pressing the slurry into part of the cells of the honeycomb carrier while pressing the end surface of the honeycomb carrier against a bottom surface of a tank,

3) Separating the honeycomb carrier from the tank while pressing the slurry into the part of the cells,

4) Removing the slurry attached to the end surface of the honeycomb carrier.

Further, according to claims 2 and 4 of the present application, above step 4) specifically has the following features:

4-1) Removing the slurry attached to the end surface while separating the honeycomb carrier from the tank (claim 2),

4-2) Separating the honeycomb carrier having the slurry pressed into the part of the cells from the tank before removing the slurry from the end surface (claim 4).

This configuration enables to prevent occurrence of sinks or through holes in a portion where cells are sealed.

II. The Configuration Disclosed in D1

D1 has the following configurations:

1a) filling the end surface of the honeycomb carrier with a slurry (sealing material),

2a) pressing the slurry by using a filling apparatus from both ends of the honeycomb carrier, the filling apparatus including a metal mask in a portion corresponding to a through hole of the sealing material and being provided in a pair while interposing a conveyor therebetween,

4a) removing the slurry attached to the outer surface of a metal mask of the filling apparatus, by using a pair of scrapers.

According to the configuration of D1, being removed is the sealing material attached to the metal mask of the filling apparatus.

D1 has an object of improving the productivity and cost-efficiency of manufacturing the honeycomb filter, and discloses the technique of using the metal mask included in a filling apparatus and having a plurality of through holes, in the process of manufacturing the honeycomb filter. By using the metal mask included in the filling apparatus instead of a sealing film for sealing the portion not to be filled, the productivity and cost-efficiency can be improved.

When referring to paragraph [0026] of D1, it is described that: "sealing paste P1 attached to the outer surface of the metal mask 13 is removed by the blade 55 before the process of drying." This indicates that D1 is not intended to remove the slurry in order to prevent the occurrence of sinks.

Moreover, in D1, the material to be removed is the slurry attached to the outer surface of the mask 13 of the filling apparatus 11, i.e., the slurry attached to the surface with which the honeycomb structure is to be in contact.

It can be understood that, in D1, the slurry attached to the honeycomb structure is removed in order to keep the honeycomb structure closely attached to the outer surface of the mask 13, since the slurry could leak in the process of filling the slurry into the honeycomb carrier.

As described above, D1 fails to disclose the configuration of preventing the occurrence of the sinks or through holes in a portion where cells are sealed. In addition, in D1, the object to be removed is the sealing material attached to the metal mask of the filling apparatus. This is totally different from the present application in which the slurry is removed from the surface of the honeycomb structure after separating the honeycomb carrier from the tank.

Further, D1 fails to include the configuration of: "Immersing an end surface of a honeycomb carrier in a slurry" of the present application.

III. The Configuration Disclosed in D2

D2 has the following configurations:

0) covering an end surface of a honeycomb carrier and provide openings in the portion facing the cells,

1b) filling the slurry into the cells through the openings,

4b) removing the slurry attached to the end surface by using the blade.

D2 describes that the sealing material 34 may be applied to the covering 28 and forced through the opening 29 by such as the blade 37, as shown in Fig. 4. (Col. 10, lines 10-15.)

However, this process is totally different from the present application in its purpose, since this is only described as an example method of filling a honeycomb structure. It is clear from the description of the drawings, which describes that, "Fig. 4 depicts schematically squeegeeing a sealing material into the ends of selected cells of a honeycomb structure."

As described above, D2 fails to disclose the configuration of preventing the occurrence of the sinks or through holes in a portion where cells are sealed. Further, D2 fails to include the configuration of: "Immersing an end surface of a honeycomb carrier in a slurry" of the present application.

IV. Conclusion

For at least the above reasons, D1 and D2, either individually or in combination, do not disclose or suggest the configuration recited in the claims, and the purpose achieved by the configuration recited in the claims. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-7 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and §103(a) is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments:
Substitute Specification (marked-up copy and clean copy)
Amended Abstract

Date: October 21, 2008

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